



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



"BURNING OF THE FRIGATE PHILADELPHIA IN THE HARBOUR OF TRIPOLI, 16th February, 1804, by 70 Gallant Tars of Columbia, commanded by Lieut. Decatur."

The Reign of the Clipper

By AGNES GERTRUDE RICHARDS

AT Marshall Field & Company's Galleries is a collection to stir fancy and patriotism alike: models and prints of famous old sailing vessels, many of which formerly made the maritime glory of New England. "All the mystery of the ships and the beauty of the sea" enchants the visits to this exhibition, for it is its romance and tradition, not its art alone, which engrosses the observer. Grey-headed old sea dogs who could remember when their father had sailed the blue in these famous clippers and enthusiastic yachtsmen, conversant with the entire history of sailing, were to be seen often in the galleries studying, with a loving and understanding eye, the prints or replicas of these speedy beauties of the waves.

"Those were the days of clippers and the freights were clipper freights," for speed was the thing on which the Yankee importer relied for profit, quick trips with

smaller cargoes proving a better investment than larger ones with greater freight. Those, too, were the days of an American merchant marine which was the envy of the world, knowing no rival save that of England and a keen enough rivalry it was with the shrewd, ingenious Yankee always in the lead. In *The Print Collector's Quarterly* Henry Collins Brown gives the following résumé of the reign of the clipper which we quote for its thoroughness and beauty:

"It seems as though it were but yesterday when South Street, New York, India Wharf in Boston, and the waterfront of Salem and Baltimore were veritable forests of masts. Across the street the long, rakish bow of a clipper would stick its nose impudently almost into the half opened window of a counting-house in which the gains and losses of the venture were being carefully computed.

"In an article on clipper ships one can refer to well-nigh any port or city in the world; but the clipper ship, as we know it, had its rise and

THE REIGN OF THE CLIPPER

was confined to the two great maritime powers of today—Great Britain and the United States. Almost from the day land was sighted, ship-building in this country may be said to have begun. Before the Pilgrims or the Puritans arrived in New England the *Virginia*, a pinnace of thirty tons, was built in 1607, in Maine, by the Popham Colonists, who had arrived during the summer in the ships *Gift of God* and *Mary and John*. The Colonists became discouraged with the severity of a New England winter and the *Virginia* took them home in safety, and afterwards made several other trips across the Atlantic. In New York Bay Adrian Block had the misfortune to lose his ship, the *Tiger*, by fire. In some utterly inexplicable manner—for he had lost tools and everything—he and his crew contrived to construct the *Onrest* or *Restless* of about sixteen tons burden. It must have been a serviceable vessel, as in it he explored Long Island Sound and part of the New England coast. It was afterwards loaded with furs and taken across the water to Holland. The Puritans also, as early as 1631, built a barque of thirty tons, called *The Blessing of the Bay*, at Medford, near Boston, and sailed between New England and New Amsterdam for several years. So you see the Yankee came by his skill and his love for the clipper in a perfectly normal and legitimate manner. His British cousin was in the same category, and when the struggle for the China tea trade began in 'the Forties,' the two nations were competitors.

"Strange to relate, notwithstanding the enormous stakes involved, the rich and lasting commerce secured, the rivalry was confined exclusively to the hardy mariners of England, old and new. No others entered the lists. The Anglo-Saxon fought it out alone. The struggle was fierce, the victory dearly won. In all the annals of commerce there is nothing to compare with the deeds of daring that were part and parcel of every voyage to the Orient. Whenever, on the seven seas a white sail was seen, moving like the wind, there would be found at its taffrail the Union Jack or the Stars and Stripes. The pace was too hot for all others.

"The rivalry of the British and American seamen forms one of the most interesting chapters in the history of the two nations. It undoubtedly had much to do with the irritation that is frequently discernible in some of the rules and regulations laid down for the Colonies. As early as 1668 the growing audacity of the colonists in building ships of their own that easily challenged the best of the English, brought forth a solemn warning by one of the leading publicists, that danger was to be apprehended from that source

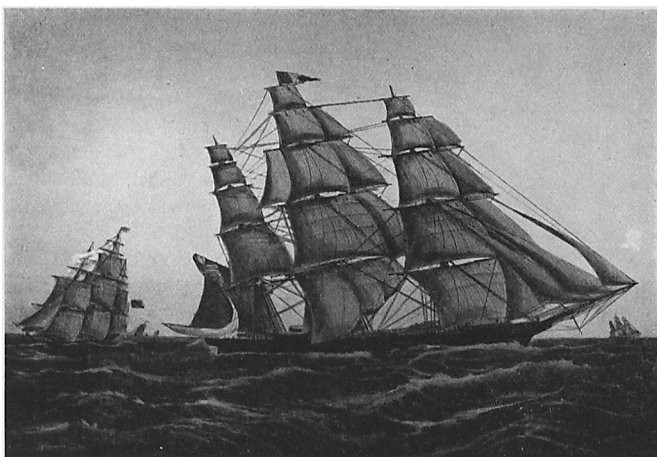
by England, as there was 'nothing more dangerous to the mother kingdom than the increase in shipping in her plantations.' At the same time he also paid an unconscious tribute to the American sailor, by adding that the soil seemed particularly adapted for the breeding of seamen, as the success of their cod and mackerel fisheries already testified. In later years the truth of this prophecy was realized.

"Privateering during the War of 1812 first directed attention to the value of speedy sailing vessels. The Harbor of New York was crowded by captured craft of the enemy, who were as playthings in the hands of the American ship. The proudest navy in the world was obliged to acknowledge the superiority of these wonderful Yankee 'pirates,' as they called them, and prizes continued to increase. British commerce received a serious setback, and when peace was restored, the American, having tasted the fruits of victory, was eager for more. He at once entered the lists for the trade of the Orient, and there began an era of ship-building which, in a few years, developed the wooden ship to a point of excellence never before dreamed of, and which reached its climax in 'the Forties.' The discovery of gold in Australia and California gave it an added impetus, but its doom was foreshadowed by the steady improvement in steam navigation. Finally, with the opening of the Suez canal, in 1869, the sceptre passed from the wind-driven vessel to the one propelled by a more dependable power. Nevertheless, it was many years before the steamer equalled the best records of the clipper for speed, and it is doubtful if such a total eclipse as has apparently overtaken the American Merchant Marine would ever have happened, had not the Civil War intervened. The present interest in wooden ships, due to the great world war, may yet revive this important industry, for our merchant marine should still be one of our greatest assets. It is as true today as in the times of the Armada, that the wealth of a nation is in proportion to her naval power."

At Field's one might see an excellent print, in color, of the famous old *Dreadnaught*, "the greatest ship that ever sailed the sea," as an old salt fervently exclaimed, *The Three Brothers*, of Boston, which, with *The Flying Cloud*, engaged in the gold trade, making the perilous trip around the Horn to the California coast, *The Bald Eagle*, *The Flying Cloud* and *Sweepstakes*, all historic as queen of the seven seas.

There were fine old lithographs by Currie, whose works attained much prom-

THE REIGN OF THE CLIPPER



SWEEPSTAKES
Drawn by F. F. Palmer

Lithograph by N. Currie, 1853
Courtesy Marshall Field & Co.

inence, not only as models of lithographic art, but as accurate drawings of the vessels portrayed. Quaint marine paintings by Beich, noted for his seascapes with clipper ships, these from the collection of an old Philadelphia family, and water colors by Jacobson, a Danish sailor on the clipper, who painted direct from careful sketches of the ships he knew and had sailed. This old sailor, now blind, was wont to while away the leisure hours of a cruise with his sketchmaking to enliven the pages of his diary so that we may well trust the accuracy of his paintings.

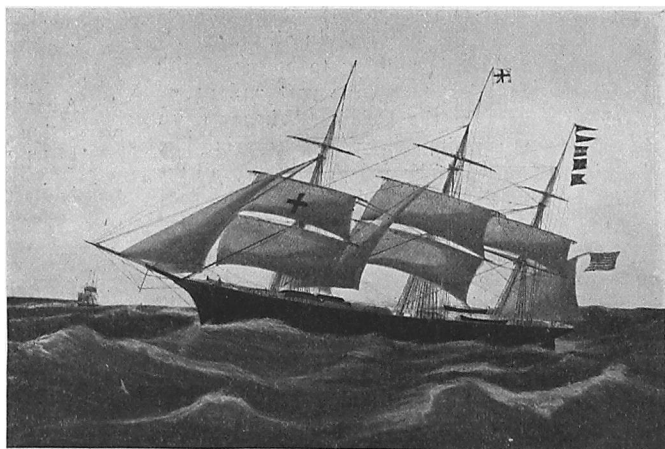
An interesting series of original aquatints showed, in quaint detail, the destruction of Admiral Thomas Graves' squadron by a hurricane, with especial attention to the tragedy of the flag ship *Ramillies*. Perry's victory on Lake Erie, and the burning of the *Philadelphian* in the harbor of Tripoli in 1870, "by seventy gallant tars of Columbia under Lieutenant Decatur," were two patriotic subjects wherein glory rose supreme

over the handicap of technical representation.

In cases about the gallery were delightful ship models or replicas which possess a romantic and decorative appeal such as suggests their use for home ornament, especially in the library or den of a yachtsman or descendant of some old Yankee skipper. Among them was a model of the *Constitution*, which, though not an exact facsimile of the famous *Old Ironsides*, was, nevertheless, a very good presentment of the type of ship of that period.

There were also models of a three-masted Dutch trader, a three-masted English vessel, an Elizabethan ship of the type which defeated the Spanish Armada, this most carefully made from exact plans of the original craft, a labor involving eight months of constant effort, and, lastly, one might actually gaze upon one of the historic bone models made by French war prisoners of England during the maritime troubles just before the War of 1812.

Accompanying these was the following explanation of the origin of ship models



DREADNAUGHT
Drawn by C. Parsons

Lithograph by N. Currie, 1854
Courtesy Marshall Field & Co.

THE REIGN OF THE CLIPPER

and of this collection:

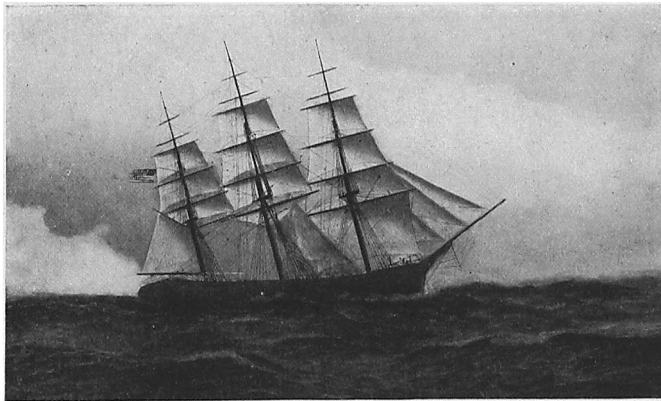
Early in the reign of Egypt, Greece and Rome, in their respective brilliant supremacy upon the seas—the latter in their proud galleys—the custom of offerings to the God of the Sea was established by which the suppliant hoped to escape from shipwreck and drowning. The offering first took form in the hanging up of dripping or sea stained garments in the Temple of Neptune in ancient Rome, and, gradually through the centuries, to the time of the supremacy of Spain, England, and Holland, developed into the custom of using the picturesque models of vessels of the different periods. At the shrines and altars of the various Cathedrals and Churches they were suspended amid the arches producing a most wonderful effect, suggesting this form in places of sufficient height.

Next came the beautifully accurate models made entirely of bone by the French Prisoner of war in the English prisons about 1790. To start such a model the prisoner accumulated the bones from meat which he received from time to time as part of his food, a bone large enough for a

mast and spar sometimes secured only after months of patient waiting. These bones were cut and polished into shape until, little by little, they were riveted in place. It has been estimated that some of the ships took from two to three years to build and are, without doubt, not only the handsomest but most accurate models conceivable.

Not long after this period and until about 1830 several of the marine insurance companies, both here and abroad, made it a practice, before insuring a vessel, to demand of the owner a miniature model of his vessel. It was during this period that many of the fine square rigged models were built. They were fitted into stands or cradles, which in turn were placed on bookcases and shelves in many of the insurance and shipping offices, suggesting this treatment for home decoration.

This present exhibition represents an accumulation of models secured during months of travel to almost every conceivable nook and corner where there would be a likelihood of finding relics of the days of the old sailing ships.



GOVERNOR ROBIE
Painted by Antonio Jacobsen

—Courtesy Marshall Field & Co.